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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet outlines the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA's) principles for lifelong learning in the arts and identifies four broad areas that guide the NEA's planning and support. The four areas include: (1) "Pre-K to Post-Secondary Arts Education"; (2) "Pre-Professional and Professional Development in the Arts"; (3) "Avocational Arts Education"; and (4) "Tradition-Based Learning in the Arts." Each of these areas is briefly described with examples. The "Principles and Characteristics of Excellence in Arts Education" and the "Statement of Principles," guiding the beliefs in a quality education and for a lifelong education in the arts, also are defined. (EH)

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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

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Lifelong Journey

An Education in the Arts

Cover photo by Nancy Jane Reid

Jane Alexander and instructor Christophora Robeers (behind Jane Alexander) with elementary school students taking a class at the Hand Workshop. Photo by Talor Dabney.

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Foreword

Lifelong learning in the arts is a journey that begins in infancy. From our very beginning, we can use our powers to reconstruct and construct an endless variety of images. Our imaginations are boundless. Our minds seem especially tuned to metaphor and symbol. From the earliest age, we begin to react to the world in signs; mother's smile is a sign that everything is well, and the infant soon realizes the effect of mimicry. We later explain the events of our lives in similes: I am as hungry as a horse; her voice is like butter; it's as hot as an oven in here. Our arguments take the form of analogies. Our emotions and feelings are expressed in a bouquet of roses or the highly charged symbolism of a kiss.

The artist seizes on our proclivity to think in metaphors and symbol. The very act of creating a work of art: a song, a sonnet, a photograph or painting is itself a symbol of our desire to capture a particular idea or feeling and communicate it with others. There is a poetry in the power of the mind to create.

Our faith in the creative mind is the foundation for the Federal government's investment in education. From the beginning, the National Endowment for the Arts has channeled its resources into programs which benefit arts education. Initially, schoolchildren received the focus of our attention, but it has become clear that we continue through our whole life to learn through the arts.

Arts education is central to fulfilling the mission of the National Endowment for the Arts to foster the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts and to encourage public participation in the arts. This pamphlet outlines the National Endowment for the Arts' principles for lifelong learning in the arts and identifies four broad areas which guide our planning and support:

- *Pre-K to Post-Secondary Arts Education*
- *Pre-Professional and Professional Development in the Arts*
- *Avocational Arts Education*
- *Tradition-Based Learning in the Arts*

These principles and characteristics of excellence in arts education can serve as guidance to arts and education organizations to help them develop and sustain quality learning experiences in the arts for people of all ages. We believe that the quality education in the arts—one that deepens aesthetic appreciation, sparks creativity and imagination, and brings understanding to the role and value of the arts in each of our lives and our society—begins in the cradle, must be nurtured by families and schools, and does not end upon graduation. Our creative life does not stop at 18 or 21 or ever. Lifelong learning in the arts is a journey of discovery, a metaphor by which we may live our lives most fully.

Jane Alexander
Chairman

Principles and Characteristics of Excellence in Arts Education

Every person deserves the chance to learn about the arts, to test their imagination, to tap their creativity potential. No matter what age or cultural background or level of education and accomplishment, each person should be able to participate in a lifelong education in the arts. We feel that educational opportunities should be geared to their particular needs, through all stages of life and in a variety of settings which embrace diverse learning systems. Education in the arts includes, but is not limited to, pre-K to grade 12 and post-secondary programs, career training, apprenticeships, individual study, and culturally specific traditions of learning.

Statement of Principles

The National Endowment for the Arts believes that a quality education in the arts:

- Pursues excellence at its core
- Provides direct involvement with artists and their work
- Heightens experience, perception, creativity and engages people through keen observation, discussion, questions and reflection on works of art
- Expands understanding of the history, critical theory and concepts of the arts
- Recognizes that all peoples contribute to the aesthetic and cultural fabric of the community
- Empowers people to better explore their creativity, to increase their knowledge of the arts and artists, and to develop skills of perception, reflection, interpretation and communication
- Projects and programs that provide an excellent education in the arts are purposeful—having clearly stated goals and expectations, and they are supported, where appropriate, by a commitment to organizational leadership, skilled staffing, budget, facilities, equipment, plans, programs and community involvement.

A lifelong education in the arts for all Americans:

- inspires their lives and improves their connections and contributions to society
- connects people to their cultural roots
- provides professional growth and direction toward careers in the arts
- develops avocational interests in the arts
- fosters knowledgeable, perceptive and appreciative audiences.

Pre-Kindergarten to Post-Secondary Arts Education

Philadelphia elementary school children learn design through the Foundation for Architecture's in-school programs. Photo by Don Tracy.

Our children start experiencing the arts the moment they recognize the rhythm of a lullaby or the shape of the mobile above the cradle. It is crucial that we continue to nurture their natural imagination and creativity when they begin their formal education and to provide challenging learning experiences throughout their school years. The arts are a core subject as defined in the National Education Goals, which call for all students to achieve competency in challenging subjects. The voluntary National Standards for Arts Education serve as a guide to states, local schools and teacher-preparation programs to develop academic standards and curricula in the arts.

All students should have access to a comprehensive education in the arts that:

- Emphasizes the intrinsic value of the knowledge and skills gained through the arts
- Stresses curriculum-based learning in and out of the classroom, including regular contact with artists, artistic works, and with arts institutions to sustain, expand and deepen students' understanding and competence in the arts
- Respects varied motivation to study the arts—including personal fulfillment, knowledge, skills, and career aspirations
- Recognizes the different ways children think and learn, the ways in which the arts can unlock their learning styles, and the need for varied learning environments
- Balances instruction in the history, critical theory and ideas of the arts with creation, production and performance
- Connects the arts across the disciplines and across the curriculum by integrating learning in and about the arts with other academic subjects as well as in out-of-school settings that provide real-world contexts for learning
- Relies upon qualified teachers, including practicing artists, and curricula designed to meet the developmental needs of all children and young adults
- Supports the professional development of teachers of the arts so they may improve their knowledge and skills
- Prepares future teachers to be familiar with and confident in the use of the arts in their classrooms.

Pre-K to 12:

Summer Creative Writing Seminars for Teachers—Associated Writing Programs and Ohio Arts Council

CHANGE COURSE! Staff and participants in front of the restored home of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Dayton, Ohio.

"School's out!" is a cry, repeated late every spring across the country, that no doubt sounds as agreeable to many teachers as it does to most students. After nine months of the daily educational routine, the prospect of three months off is a remarkably attractive one. Yet not all teachers elect to leave the classroom. Some of them return to school, as do the 24 junior high and high school English teachers in Virginia and Ohio every year who participate in summer creative writing seminars—not as teachers on this occasion, but rather as students.

Sponsored each year by Associated Writing Programs (AWP) of Fairfax, VA, and by the Ohio Arts Council, the seminars combine committed teachers, competitively chosen, with accomplished writers who share their writing and teaching techniques, and who visit the participating teachers' schools the following year to work with *their* students. Additionally, the program also provides funds for books by contemporary writers for classroom use. The goal, observes Roxanne French Thornhill, who coordinates the program for AWP at Virginia Commonwealth University each summer, is two-fold: "to help create writers and lifelong readers of contemporary literature." By bringing writers into the classroom, and building contemporary American poetry and fiction into the literature curriculum, the program has achieved that "staying power" that's rarely produced by more fleeting, one-shot efforts to introduce students to the art of their own time. The participating teachers, in turn, gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence that permit them to continue to engage students in the creative writing process.

The program administered by the Ohio Arts Council is called Change Course!, and it's held at Wright State University in Dayton for five weeks every summer. But the program, which combines intensive writing workshops with nationally known writers, sessions with visiting writers from around the region, and classes on portfolio

Poet Toi Berricotte at a book signing, Wright State University, June 1994 as part of CHANGE COURSE!

assessment and curriculum development, does not end with the five-week session. Participants attend ten follow-up meetings on Saturdays throughout the regular school year, host visiting writers at their own schools, visit the schools of other participants to work on new teaching methodologies, and take part in local, state, regional, and national meetings. The teachers also receive 12 hours of tuition-paid graduate school credit for their efforts, credit that does not come easily. "I'll tell you, we worked 12 hours a day for that credit," recalls Mary Ellen Grunder of Dayton. "It was like a boot camp for writing," adds Stephanie Corcoran, also of Dayton. "We ate and drank and slept writing."

The program is designed to encourage teachers to think in new ways about incorporating creative writing into the language-arts curriculum. The theory behind Change Course!, explains OAC project coordinator Bob Fox, is that the most effective teachers are both readers *and* writers, that in coming to terms with the writing process themselves, teachers "better understand their students' struggles and achievements." The most effective teachers, moreover, are "professional educators," according to Fox, "classroom researchers who contribute to the professional conversation about current teaching methodology and philosophy." In addition to underscoring these theoretical aspects of education, the Change Course! program also reinforces the notion that all writing, "from poems to term papers, is creative, equally deserving of respectful attention."

Theory is one thing, practice quite another, most educators would agree, but the summer creative writing seminars appear to be scoring highly in both areas. At least they're passing the toughest test of all, building excitement among young people for both reading and writing. "As a writer, now I learn from reading books," wrote one of Ohio teacher Jody Morton's junior high school students. "Reading really gives me an idea of how to write. The more I read the better my techniques of writing grow." "My skills in writing have improved from none to some," wrote another. "I can write now and not find it the most boring thing in the world...." There's still a lot of progress to be made, clearly, and national literacy statistics—25-27 million functionally illiterate adults in the U.S., with another 45 million adults only marginally proficient—are not encouraging. But for a small and growing number of educators in Virginia and Ohio, who are improving writing skills and building new interest in contemporary literature in the process, the picture is definitely improving.

Pre-K to 12:

Foundation for Architecture

When one thinks of elementary and secondary education in America, from the traditional 3Rs to the countless innovations that have been added over the years, it's unlikely that the subject of architecture comes readily to mind. On the one hand, it's a topic we tend to take for granted: students live in houses designed by someone, attend school in a building designed by someone else, and travel between those two destinations through a built environment that is the work of many hands. At the same time, architecture as a field of study is generally regarded as an area of specialization reserved for college classes and professional schools. That combination of ubiquity and professionalization has combined to keep architecture beyond the reach of most K-12 students, but Philadelphia's Foundation for Architecture is determined to change that.

Since 1981, the Foundation for Architecture has undertaken a unique program designed to find a home for architecture in the K-12 classroom. The effort is built around three-person teams—a teacher, a design professional, and a graduate student—that plan and implement the integration of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and historic preservation projects into the teacher's basic lesson plans. The goal is not to train young architects or urban planners, but rather to develop, through hands-on activities, the perceptual, social, and technological skills that can be applied across the K-12 curriculum. The Architecture in Education program, in other words, offers opportunities not only for teaching about the built environment, but for developing the fundamental skills that will enhance the students' powers of observation, analysis, problem-solving, and self-expression, serving them well throughout their school years and beyond.

"Through this program," explains Pamela Carunchio, the foundation's director of education, "students gain an increased understanding of the dynamics of the neighborhood and the city around them, and of other civilizations and cultures, while mastering the processes and skills in a variety of disciplines. Students also experience the need for responsible design, planning, and decision making as individuals and in cooperation with others." The lessons learned are not limited to architecture and design, however. Through planning sessions with the classroom teachers, various elements of the design arts are woven into other aspects of the curriculum, from science and math to social studies and history.

Students at the Alexander McClure Elementary School in Philadelphia, for example, built architectural models of their vision for a vacant block in their neighborhood. In place of weeds and broken bottles, the children offered cardboard miniatures of what they saw as essential to a thriving neighborhood: an apartment complex, supermarket, bakery, flower shop, beauty parlor, church, and, because this was a children's plan, after all, a video arcade. Not lacking for detail, the students' model

block included trees and plants, streetlights, and other amenities. They had discovered, in other words, that cities consist of more than concrete and asphalt, and began to look at their own surroundings accordingly. And the learning process works both ways, with the experts gaining new insights from their pupils. "The first thing I learned," recalled architect Edward Paliscoc, who worked with a kindergarten class at an inner-city Philadelphia school, "is never to underestimate the intelligence of children, especially kindergartners. They were quick to grasp the concepts. The children wound up being very much teachers as well as students."

Building bridges in the 5th grade.

Each year, the Architecture in Education program directly reaches about 5,000 students in public, parochial, and independent schools throughout Philadelphia and the greater Delaware Valley, and nearly 2,000 educators nationally. In addition to the core eight-week in-classroom program, AIE also offers workshops for students on timely themes, in-service teacher-training seminars, and collaborative projects with community groups, universities, and cultural organizations. The foundation's 1986 publication, *Architecture in Education: A Resource of Imaginative Ideas and Tested Activities*, an illustrated compilation of over 200 hands-on activities, has been distributed to educators and design professionals throughout the US and in 20 foreign countries. The foundation also maintains a resource center, a collection of some 1,000 books, 3,000 slides, and related educational materials, which is available to AIE alumni.

"This was a golden experience!" exclaimed fourth-grade teacher Lucille Keyes, describing her eight-week session with the Architecture in Education Program. "Without a doubt, if I were not working with AIE, I would not have attempted to do the wonderful project we offered the children this year. Certainly when students believe they are creating something which is original, useful and long lasting, they remain highly motivated and learn a great deal. Students were proud to learn technical terms and wanted to use them as they problem-solved."

One of the fourth-grade students expressed her feelings about the program in simpler, but no less enthusiastic, terms: "We didn't learn by reading or listening," explained Amy Coslett, "we learned by doing things." That's the kind of endorsement that the Foundation for Architecture hears often, a tribute to a unique educational program that manages, by placing the tools of the architect in the hands of children, to give them a new sense of their surroundings—and a new vision of the future—in the process.

Post-Secondary:

Illinois Institute of Technology

"Design" is one of those words, like "art" or "excellence," that means so many things to so many people, that sometimes it appears not to mean very much at all. It is a word, Professor John Heskett of the Institute of Design at the Illinois Institute of Technology has written, "that has become fashionable but is widely misused or limited to convenient commercial slogans. Even at levels in industry, commerce, the media and public life, where its particular contribution to the quantitative concerns of economic success and the qualitative concerns of life-values should be evident, there is considerable misunderstanding."

Researchers at the Illinois Institute of Technology use interactive media to develop design curricula linked to cultural changes of the past two centuries. Photo by Robert Drea.

Such misunderstanding is especially troubling to design professionals, and to those educators, like Heskett, charged both with preparing the next generation of practitioners and with helping to foster a greater appreciation, not only among specialists but among all Americans, of the importance of design to our lives. "All too often design is synonymous with fashionable names or surface decoration," Heskett observes, "Yet beyond such superficial limitations, it is an activity that affects every aspect of daily life, at home, at work and play, on the street and in forms of transport. Moreover, decisions affecting the quality of design in products, communications and environments are made at a variety of political and professional levels."

Recognizing that there is no quick fix to a problem whose roots lie in nineteenth-century industrialization and whose branches extend to twentieth-century mass media, the Institute of Design has proposed a long-term solution, developing a cross-disciplinary undergraduate course, "Design, Technology and Culture," intended to help freshmen and sophomores in science, humanities, and the arts understand design as an interdependent field related to cultural, economic, and technological forces in society. Targeting students at the undergraduate level, students whose "minds are still open to a broad range of influences," according to Heskett, the course is designed to "provide an experience and understanding of design to an audience likely at subsequent stages of their life to hold positions of responsibility in which they can influence, for better or worse, how design affects living, working and public environments."

Drawing on key documents and illustrations from nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, the course focuses on the development of design in the modern world from three perspectives, which Heskett summarizes as "the concept, context and consequences of design." It's a necessarily broad-based, long-range view, but one that Heskett is convinced gives students the historical grounding they need to understand the full impact of design on modern life. Thus students are treated to (1) a review of the history and growth of design practice and organization as a response to social, economic, and technological change; (2) an examination of structures and policies in industry, commerce, and government within which design activity is defined; and (3) a survey of some of the social and cultural implications of the application and influence of design in contemporary life.

Operating in a field as underserved as this one, the Illinois Institute of Technology's approach is an evolving one, a continuing dialog with the field, really, and one that may soon extend well beyond the reach of the Chicago campus itself. For along with developing the course and collecting illustrative material for in-class display, Heskett and his assistants are putting together a self-contained, interactive version of the course that eventually, through CD-ROM or communications networks, may reach a national or even international audience.

The concept of design may remain a slippery one for many people, but in initiating discussions such as this one, working with students who will be continuing the dialog in years to come, Heskett and his colleagues are helping to make sure that our grasp of design, and of the many ways it affects us, will only become more secure.

Pre-Professional and Professional Development in the Arts

Alvin Ailey American Dance Center students Yaa Yaa Whaley, Eugene Rhodes, Apryl Webb, Harlan Blaike. Junior Division, Ballet Class. Photo by Beatriz Schiller.

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People who aspire to careers in the arts need specialized education and training. Aspiring artists and administrators might develop their talents through trial and effort in their art forms or through interaction with qualified instructors or mentors.

Pre-Professional development may occur in a variety of settings, from the classroom to the studio, but ideally it should:

- Provide education as well as training
- Acquaint emerging arts professionals with career possibilities
- Develop aesthetic sensitivity along with technical and cognitive skills that make it easier to find work
- Foster mentor and apprentice relationships.

Arts professionals often continue to study and learn throughout their careers, in order to augment their professional qualifications or abilities. This training may take place through sabbaticals, field experiments, commissioning, or residencies, and it may involve interaction with peers and instructing others in a variety of educational settings.

In all cases, professional development in the arts should:

- Enable artists to discover new techniques and approaches which lead to the creation of new works
- Equip arts administrators with the skills necessary to promote and sustain excellent art through their organizations
- Nurture the expertise necessary for arts professionals to build and maintain audiences and advocates for the arts.

Pre-Professional and Professional Development:

Alvin Ailey American Dance Center

Mention the name Alvin Ailey to a dance aficionado—even to a casual observer of the art—and the discussion inevitably turns to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, internationally acclaimed as one of the leading dance ensembles. Less well known, perhaps, but equally important to the late choreographer's vision when he founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center in Brooklyn in 1969, is the dance school that is at the heart of that operation. Ailey was always more than just a creator and performer of dance, profound as his accomplishments in those areas may have been. He was also a teacher, convinced of the importance of imparting the movement and magic of dance to young people.

One hundred and twenty-five students enrolled in Ailey's school in its initial year, but that was only the beginning. Firm in his belief that dance instruction should be available to all who seek it, Ailey joined forces with choreographer Pearl Lang in 1970 to establish the American Dance Center in Manhattan. Today, under the direction of Denise Jefferson, the school trains approximately 3,000 students annually, with classes from beginning through professional levels for dancers three years and older.

From the start, Ailey had four broad educational objectives in mind. First, he wanted to make dance accessible to young people and adults through dance training and innovative community arts-in-education programs. "From the very beginning," Jefferson explains, "our founder, Mr. Ailey, felt that dance comes from the people and needs to be given back to them. In his own experience, his first exposure to dance came as a junior high school student in California, when his English teacher took his class to see the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. The next year another teacher took them to see Katherine Dunham, and that experience, especially seeing an African American dance pioneer like Dunham, convinced him of the importance of making dance accessible to young people. More generally, Mr. Ailey also came to see himself as a link to all ages, all races, since dance is—or rather should be—a natural part of everyone's life."

Young dancers in the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center First Steps program. Photo by Marbeth.

Upper Division students of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center. Photo by Beatriz Schiller.

Ailey's second objective is to offer students the opportunity to follow a curriculum of diversified dance training of the highest professional caliber, a goal that Jefferson also traces to the school's founder. "Mr. Ailey always thought that the perfect dancer has ballet feet and legs and a modern dance torso," Jefferson recalls, "and Pearl Lang, who was highly trained in the Graham technique, felt the same way. We've maintained that dual focus over the years, and expanded it, adding Dunham and West African, East Indian and Spanish, yoga and jazz—a vast range of forms and influences, since dancers today have to be prepared to perform a variety of roles in a variety of settings."

The Ailey Dance Center's third objective—to maintain a professional faculty of exceptional teachers, musicians, and guest artists—is something of which Jefferson is especially proud. "We have a huge faculty here," Jefferson notes, "and we try to get teachers who are specialists in the technique they teach, rather than having generalists. We also bring in choreographers to do repertory workshops—the full range, from classical ballet to cutting edge."

The school's fourth objective, to train outstanding students as professional dancers and provide them with tuition assistance, Federal financial aid, and other support services, goes well beyond monetary support alone (although there's a lot of that, with some 50 to 60 scholarship students each year). "We also offer career, personal, and nutritional counseling, and we've instituted a program of student peer advisors and student representatives who meet regularly with staff, all in an effort to create the best environment for learning dance."

Recognizing the difficulty of making the transition from formal training to a professional career, finally, Ailey established a second company—the Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble—which serves as a bridge between the academic and professional worlds. Members of the ensemble have completed advanced degrees at the Dance Center, refining their skills while acquiring invaluable experience touring and performing around the United States, and having an opportunity to conduct classes and lecture/demonstrations in schools and community centers. Many graduates make their way into one or both of the Ailey companies, while others have pursued successful careers as choreographers, teachers, and performers in film, television, and theater.

Of course, most of the thousands of students who pass through the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, young and old alike, never perform professionally. Yet these students also reap the benefits of study, of struggling, individually and collectively, to train their bodies to conform to the lines and movements set by others. "First, they learn to have a new respect for their own bodies," Jefferson observes, "and they learn to respect authority. They also learn new ways to communicate, new ways of working together, lessons that will benefit them in so many other aspects of their lives."

Pre-Professional and Professional Development:

New York Folklore Society

Give a man a fish, the old saying goes, and he will eat for a day, but *teach* that man how to fish, and he will never go hungry. Something of the spirit of that axiom animates the New York Folklore Society's Mentoring Program for Folklife and Traditional Arts. The program offers opportunities for technical assistance and professional training to organizations and individuals engaged in or planning folk arts programs throughout New York State. Covering a broad range of knowledge, skills, and methodologies, from fieldwork and documentation to marketing and presentation, the mentoring program provides a crucial link between artist and audience that is particularly important in the traditional arts, which generally lack the institutional support of the other arts. "Our intent," observes John Suter, NYFS executive director, "is to enable folklore professionals and folk artists to develop or improve skills that will enable them to be more successful in their work." As a kind of portable, post-graduate training program, the NYFS mentoring effort targets key elements in the creation and dissemination of the folk and traditional arts.

In the city of Troy, for example, professional photographer Marty Cooper of New York City conducted a two-day workshop for five upstate folklorists, allowing them to hone their photographic skills, which are so important to the proper documentation and presentation of many folk arts. Folk arts professional Pat Wells, similarly, traveled from Kentucky to Syracuse to conduct a workshop for folk artists to acquaint them with some of the aspects of professionalization—marketing, contracts, health insurance, networking, distribution, and the like—that will allow these artists to reach much larger audiences.

In other cases, the mentoring program has had a stimulating effect on a particular community, spawning new interest in the traditional arts. In the rural upstate town of Sodus, for example, a mentoring effort was conducted to serve an African-American quilting and sewing circle. In the process of meeting with these women, helping them to preserve and celebrate their craft, the visiting specialists discovered a rich vein of traditional African-American hairdressing, special techniques that were all but ignored by the younger members of the community, but which held special meaning to their elders. Upon investigation, it turned out that Patricia Walker is the only person in rural upstate New York who still uses the marcel hot-iron method, the predecessor of more modern, chemical methods. A new mentoring program enabled Ms. Walker to conduct a workshop on hot-iron hairdressing, introducing this skill, long treasured by older African-American women, to their children and grandchildren.

"Our focus," Suter explains, "is on communities that traditionally have been 'outside of the loop,' that is, on some of the underserved areas of folklore." These include ethnic communities striving to preserve their traditions in a new urban context, recreating *El Dia Del Nino* festivities on New York City's Lower East Side, for

example, or improving the Chinese Theater Workshop's marketing skills, both of which have received the attention of the NYFS in recent years. But equally underserved, ironically are such contemporary forms of expression as hip hop at the Rhythm Cultural Institute in New York City or the Haitian band Jazz des Jeunes, forms whose traditional roots are often lost in some of the more commercial manifestations of the culture. Rescuing these traditions from the mill of market-driven entertainment, allowing them to stand out against the clamor of purely commercial fare, requires both persistence and specialized training of the sort that the NYFS mentoring program regularly offers.

In both respects, then, working either with folk arts administrators and programmers or with the artists themselves, the New York Folklore Society offers different kinds of professional training that works ultimately toward the same goal: making more art available to more people, and giving new life to old forms in the process.

Videotaping walking sticks for documentary, "God's Mother is the Morning Star: The Life and Art of Joseph Mender." Peter Biella and Karen Lux, co-directors; Ivan Drufovka-Restrepo, sound technician. Photo courtesy of Documentary Film.

Avocational Arts Education

Family Arts Festival, 1993. The beginnings of a 'nest' shelter created from natural and found materials. Artist: Linna Muschlitz. Photo by Nancy Jane Reid.

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Outside the formal school curriculum and beyond the parameters of the job, many people of all ages take an active interest in the arts. They deserve access to structured opportunities for avocational arts education. The benefits of lifelong learning as an avocation are numerous—from enhancing recreation and leisure time to engendering civic pride. Avocational learning in the arts can lead to increased understanding and appreciation of the arts and the culture of others, greater self-knowledge, confidence and skills, and a personal investment in the cultural life of your community.

People find arts classes in a variety of settings, including community cultural centers such as museums, libraries, schools and recreation facilities, hospitals, senior centers, or churches and temples. The instruction may be exclusively in or about the arts, or it may be offered in programs designed to improve the general health and welfare of the participants. In all cases, however, excellent avocational education:

- Maintains high standards of teaching
- Embraces the highest goals of artistic accomplishment
- Encourages creative thinking, understanding the creative act, and the production of art.

Avocational:

Grass Roots Arts and Community Efforts (GRACE)

"Definitions of the GRACE organization," observes Don Sunseri, founder and artistic director of Grass Roots Art and Community Effort, "are sometimes as varied as the blind man's description of an elephant. There is a tendency to describe us by a single aspect of what we do." More casual observers of GRACE might assume, for example, that the twenty-year-old organization is strictly a program for elders, since many of its activities, the workshops and exhibitions in particular, are carried out in nursing homes and senior-citizen centers. Yet that interpretation overlooks the GRACE-in-the-schools program that targets youngsters, or the many programs directed at developmentally disabled persons of all ages. "The GRACE schedule of events," Sunseri points out, "clearly shows that we are an organization with many facets—each reflects light on the others. The whole piece can be seen as a single shape or principle—wherever we work, with 'whomever' the population, our message to the art maker is always 'be yourself and do it your own way.' GRACE artists follow no style but their own, and their art, because it is so personal, has a power to reach out...."

More telling, in any case, than any one-dimensional appraisal of GRACE is the simple one-line description that adorns the masthead of "G.R.A.C.E. News," the organization's newsletter: "GRACE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating the artistic voices of the region." The region in question is Northern Vermont, specifically the 3,000-square-mile area known as the "Northeast Kingdom" (although the organization frequently ventures further afield, including New Hampshire and Connecticut and occasionally well beyond New England). And the "artistic voices" are as varied as the countryside itself, with its rolling hills, glacial lakes, and pine and maple forests. "Our mission," Sunseri explains, "is to discover, develop, and promote 'native talent' (sometimes called self-taught, indigenous, naive, outsider, or folk art) in Northern Vermont." Such talent is found, surprisingly enough, among the "ordinary people," retired farmers, housewives, factory workers, and the like, some of them with what polite society calls "disabilities," but all of them with a remarkable ability to translate their lives into visual media, from simple pencil sketches to elaborate oil paintings.

GRACE workshop, 1995. Rowan-Court Nursing Home, Barre, Vermont.

Vermont Respite House, Williston, Vermont. Lillian Peri, Christine Dannies, Amy Murray, Quinn Dannies, participants at GRACE workshop, 1995.

"The depth and authenticity that is tapped almost effortlessly by the untrained artist," wrote critic Lucy Lippard in GRACE's ten-year retrospective exhibition catalog, "has long been a source of fascination, and a thorn in the flesh, of professional artists." The GRACE artists themselves, on the other hand, are apt to view their accomplishments in more unassuming terms. "Don't put my name in the paper as an artist, said Roland Rochette, two years before his death at the age of 99. "Just say it's an old man trying to help himself. This might get some people to go and help themselves. In this life, you need the will to help yourself. If you have that, you're all right. And you need to be a nut."

As the director of hands-on activities for such free-spirited, self-taught individuals, Sunseri is decidedly hands-off in his pedagogical style. "My primary task," he explains, "is to encourage self-expression. A most important message is that each of us is in possession of a well—a well of experience that deepens as we age. To draw from that well is to draw from the source of all art. The emphasis is on the process of art-making as an adventure. We never know where it will lead us. There are no rules for getting there."

No rules, perhaps, but plenty of encouragement, as GRACE workshops—over 450 a year—are held on-site in settings familiar to the participants, and without the rigor of a formal class. "There is no systematic instruction in technique or style," Sunseri insists. "A variety of materials is offered on tables arranged so that it allows the participant the choice of working in a small group or alone. Choice is most important. You choose where you want to sit, your materials and method. Even when only making a choice between two colors, in making that choice you are 'the boss.' The workshops require a comfortable, supportive atmosphere. Coffee, tea and cookies are offered along with my advice to 'be yourself.'"

That advice has paid rich dividends for GRACE, which has seen its work featured in the pages of *Smithsonian* magazine and on the CNN television network, and whose artists have achieved celebrity status in the suddenly fashionable world of folk or "outsider" art. But for all of that success, the essence of GRACE remains more modest, much closer in sprit to the observation of GRACE staff member Michael Gray, who dismisses the notion of outsider art. "The art making process here is a lot more honest and genuine than some 'inside artists,'" Gray insists. "It's done purely for the joy of making something."

Avocational:

Oregon Coast Council for the Arts

Newport, Oregon, is the kind of town—perched on the scenic Pacific coast—that attracts people seeking an escape from everyday life. Newport's population, well under 2,000, swells considerably during the long tourist season. Yet like many American communities, Newport has problems of its own, problems from which there *is* no escape. The seasonal restaurant, souvenir shop, and motel jobs produced by the annual influx of tourists are generally low paying, and certainly no substitute for the logging and fishing industries that have suffered in recent years. And the economic strain is only one part of Newport's problems. Lincoln County, of which Newport is the county seat, has the highest per capita rate of drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, teen suicide, teenage parents, divorce, single-parent families, and adolescent AIDS in the state. In the language of the federal government, Lincoln County is "an economically and culturally deprived area."

It is against this grim backdrop that the Oregon Coast Council for the Arts (OCCA) has operated since 1977. If the Newport Performing and Visual Arts Centers are the most immediately *visible* of OCCA's varied activities, they are no mere jewel boxes safely removed from the community's social concerns. On the contrary, the centers comprise one of the key elements of OCCA's Family Arts Agenda (FAA), a program designed to strengthen families and to connect them to the community through the arts. As Harvard professor Robin Ely observed (on the occasion of OCCA and the arts center receiving a John F. Kennedy School of Government's Innovation in State and Local Government Award in 1990), "Whereas most performing arts centers are developed solely with artistic, economic and perhaps political needs in mind, this Center...grew from the needs of the community and with the involvement of many diverse segments of the community all along the way."

"The FAA is based on the belief that every human being is intended to be creative and expressive," explains OCCA director Sharon Morgan, "and once people get back in touch with their creativity, once they re-open these lines of communication, they can begin to take control of some of the other aspects of their lives that may be troubling them." Self-expression builds hope, Morgan is convinced, and that, too, can translate into other areas of one's life. "The FAA is built around those three things," Morgan notes, "creativity, communication, and hopefulness, which, of course, can affect everything we do."

Among OCCA's partners in carrying out its Family Arts Agenda are Lincoln County's Human Services, Juvenile Services, and the Extension Service, which work with OCCA on arts activities that target drug and alcohol addicts, children with emotional disorders, and their families. In one project, for example, a visual artist worked with recovering alcoholics and drug abusers to teach them to express their feelings through painting and drawing, as a positive alternative to the destructive behavior associated with chemical dependency. In another project, a poet helped victims of sex-

ual abuse come to terms with their past by encouraging them to write about that experience, using art to help them overcome anger and grief. Perhaps the clearest example of the FAA approach is that of the singer/songwriter who taught young mothers to sing to their children, a seemingly natural activity that simply had not been a part of their own experience as children.

The FAA also involves local youth councils, Girl Scouts, YMCAs, parks and recreation departments, and the Job Corps in enhancing the lives of area residents, particularly children. With an $85,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, for example, OCCA worked with the Lincoln County Extension Service to establish the "Kid Konnection," an innovative project that teams at-risk youth between the ages of seven and eleven with older teenagers and adults (many of whom have experienced the same problems as their younger partners) to work on circus performance skills. Whole families get involved, 136 of them in the most recent session, with a variety of after-school activities, summer day camps for children, and in some years, when the budget permits, a summer retreat for the entire family. "For some of these families," Morgan points out, "this is the only vacation they ever get, so it's especially important."

Artist Elizabeth Rose demonstrates papermaking to a teen mother for a "Mom & Me" handbound book project. Photo by Nancy Jane Reid.

But why a circus? "We wanted to do something unique," Morgan explains. "We already had theater programs for kids, and music, writing, and dance programs. We wanted to get at some of the underlying factors that affect children today, beyond poverty and abuse, things like disabilities of all kinds, learning disorders, anything, really, that robs one of self-esteem and that feeling of prestige in some area that we all need to function effectively. And circus-based skills are remarkably varied, with juggling helping to build eye-hand coordination, and tumbling dealing with large motor skills." And then there are all of the cognitive and social skills—thinking through problems and working together—that putting on a circus performance entails.

But the point of the Kid Konnection is not really the public performances that are held every year, although these are a source of great community entertainment. Rather, it is the increased self-confidence, the new communication skills, and the spirit of creativity, developed in children and families that were sorely lacking in all three areas, that is at the heart of the Kid Konnection. "We've seen a rise in school performance and attendance among the children who participated in the program," Morgan declares. "We're starting to track their parents' interactions with schools and with the community, and that, too, is showing signs of improvement. So the program appears to be working all the way around."

Tradition-Based Learning in the Arts

San Rafael Mission church, La Cueva, New Mexico. 1991. The community of La Cueva has been working with CORNERSTONES, Community Partnerships since 1990 on the restoration of this gothic adobe church—one of New Mexico's architectural treasures.

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Long before there were schools, people learned about the arts. Every culture has developed systematic approaches and methods of passing on aesthetics, artistic knowledge and the special skills and techniques of creating art. Those old ways continue to this day and are kept vibrant by peoples linked by a common heritage. Appalachian fiddlers, Japanese bon dancers, Navajo weavers, African American blues musicians, Puerto Rican santeros, and countless other traditional artists learn their skills at the knee of their elders. In informal home and community gatherings, tradition-based learning in the arts deserves our respect and support.

Excellent tradition-based learning:

- Provides access to the best artistic models within a particular tradition
- Links the educational experience with the cultural knowledge and values that underlie and are expressed in the art form
- Recognizes the importance of traditional systems and methods of teaching and learning, such as one-to-one master/apprenticeship relationships
- Values the cultural occasions and social customs that are the contexts of traditional learning.

Tradition-Based Learning:

Cornerstones, Community Partnerships

Members of the community of Ojo Caliente restoring their historic Santa Cruz Church (c.1790) with assistance from CORNERSTONES, Community Partnerships. The church is now fully restored. Photo by Steve Peart.

Much has been written about the disintegration of spiritual values in America, statements that range from sincere expressions of concern for our future, to patently self-serving campaigns designed more to raise funds than to elevate the level of debate. Residents of New Mexico, however, face the specter of disintegration of another sort, not unrelated to spirituality, but with more pressing real-world implications that demand immediate attention. The historic churches of the state, more than 1,500 of them, are literally returning to the earth from which they came. Built of earthen materials by Hispanic and Indian villagers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these historically important edifices now face severe threats, both from the natural elements of wind and rain, but also from the well intentioned but improper use of cement plaster, which can admit hidden moisture, further weakening the adobe and actually hastening the deterioration of the structures.

In response to this problem, a very real threat to the major Hispanic contribution to our nation's vernacular architecture, the New Mexico Community Foundation launched in 1985 an ambitious program called "Churches: Symbols of Community." Although targeting the buildings themselves—some 800 historic religious structures included in an annotated survey sponsored earlier by the National Endowment for the Arts—the project is rooted firmly in the communities where these historic structures are located, communities that have much more to gain, through training and collaboration, than the reclamation of the old churches alone.

"These buildings are sources of pride not only for Hispanic Americans, but for all Americans," points out Sam Baca, program coordinator of Cornerstones, Community Partnerships, the nonprofit organization that emerged out of the original Symbols of Community project in 1994. "They are internationally recognized bridges between epochs, cultures, nations, and faiths. They bridge generations by maintaining those values of sharing and cooperation, artistic genius and faith, which first raised them from the earth."

These days in New Mexico, most of the day-to-day church maintenance is carried out by community members themselves, often under the direction of *mayordomos*, who are community members elected to serve as church caretakers. In the absence of adequate training in proper adobe preservation techniques, however, the existing system was inefficient at best, deleterious at worst. It was for this reason that the Symbols of Community project established its elaborate training program, developing preservation skills among members of the community (with over 100 communities served thus far), who in turn pass these skills on to other members of the community. Passed on as well, Baca is convinced, is a sense of tradition and communal spirit that reflects the central role that the church once played in the region. "The church was not only the physical and spiritual center of the community," Baca points out, "but the social center as well. With this project, training individuals and encouraging them to pass on their training to others, we're beginning to recapture that communal spirit here in New Mexico. And it's not just the skills that are passed on, but equally important, a sense of tradition and the spirit of working together that are transmitted as well, to everyone's benefit." Or, as Father Tim Martinez of the St. Gertrude Parish in Mora, New Mexico, so succinctly put it, "When we repair a crack in a wall, we take steps toward repairing the divisions that exist among us."

So successful has the church restoration project been that Cornerstones has extended the concept to embrace cultural preservation more generally. The organization has been especially active at Zuni Pueblo and Dona Ana, where it has trained tribal youth in traditional stone quarrying and masonry techniques. Here again, more than the past is being preserved in the Zuni and Hopi youth training program. For along with a vivid education in some of the traditions of their ancestors, the tribal youth who participate in the Cornerstones education program also receive GED training, counseling, and, ultimately, marketable skills that will translate into a much brighter future for themselves and their families.

Local Doña Ana youth learn marketable skills in historic building practices at the Neustra Señora de la Candelaria church. Photo by Ed Crocker.

Tradition-Based Learning:

Zivili

For members of the dance company known as Zivili, education isn't merely an option. The learning process begins, in fact, as soon as the company's name is mentioned. Nor is it simply a matter of explaining what that name means, either. (It's a Croatian toast, "To Life!"). Rather, the lesson involves what the Columbus, Ohio-based company is, and what it is not. "Zivili is not a folk dance company," insists its dance and executive director, Melissa Pintar Obenauf, writing in an essay she includes in the company's K-12 study guide. "We are an *ethnic* dance company; we have a specific, very technical *terminology*, we perform in a traditional *style*, and we have defined our own *school of instruction*. In having built the preceding foundation, we have gone a step beyond what is generally referred to as 'folk dancing,' and have presented folk dances on stage. Because we have taken folk dances to the stage, there are some changes in the dances that are made." Those changes, always involving a great deal of research on the part of Obenauf and co-director Pamela Lacko Kelley, include the length of a work, the nature of the musical accompaniment, and, invariably, the location of the performance itself. "The minute a dance is removed from its natural environs and performed for an audience, rather than solely for the purpose for which it was intended," Obenauf continues, "it ceases to be 'folk dancing' and we now call it 'ethnic dance.'"

The lesson of Zivili does not end with the distinction between folk and ethnic performance, however. For Zivili is not simply a generic ethnic dance company, delighting American audiences with Old World favorites, but rather one that collects, preserves, and celebrates the culture of a very specific region, the Southern Slavic nations. Perhaps more than any other spot on the globe, the warring factions of this region are in dire need of the kind of special attention that Zivili offers. "We're the only company anywhere doing what we're doing," Obenauf points out. "And our mission has become even more important, since the works we're trying to preserve are daily being lost. Obviously the people of that area can't be concerned with preserving culture right now—they're struggling simply to survive—and thus our preservation efforts are even more important right now."

Members of the Slavic dance troupe Zivili. Photo by Jeffrey A. Rycus.

Founded in 1973 by three women of Croatian descent, the 30-member troupe offers a full slate of in-school performances, lecture-demonstrations, "informances," and master classes every year, reaching some 200,000 children in the process. The benefits of these outreach efforts are both practical and philosophical, according to Obenauf. "They mean more paid employment for the dancers," she explains, "but they also help keep the community informed of our activities, so the educational residencies are doubly beneficial. The young people bring the excitement of dance home to their parents, many of whom get involved in our community events."

Zivili: the next generation. Photo by Jeffrey A. Rycus.

Throughout its performance activities, both in schools and in communities, Zivili maintains a firm policy of presenting a full sampling of the complex Southern Slavic heritage. "Often Croatian-Americans won't want to see Serbian dancers, or vice versa, and neither group wants to see Bosnian work. But we precede each performance with a statement that it is Zivili's mission to preserve what's *good* about people—regardless of their ethnic background—and that seems to diffuse much of the animosity."

Zivili's lesson, then, extends far behind the narrow slice of Slavic culture in which it specializes, inviting all who see the troupe to share in its message of hope and renewal. "What the company is celebrating," points out dance critic Dale Harris in the *Wall Street Journal*, "is an unrecoverable past. In doing so, however, it is at the same time celebrating the virtues of the U.S.—its hospitality and curiosity and, its belief in diversity, the opportunities it offers for self-renewal. Zivili's animating spirit my be an ethnically specific national pride, but no American, whatever his or her heritage, is likely to feel excluded from participation in the troupe's festive spirit."

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